

ACTON notes

Acton Institute Newsletter

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“Connecting good intentions with sound economics”

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President's Message

"I am deeply grateful to everyone who makes this event possible."

Acton University is one of the high points of the year. It is marvelously inspirational for both the participants and organizers. The speakers find earnest students willing to learn and the students encounter teachers who are open to questions and willing to engage.

Everyone at the event unashamedly embraced both faith and freedom as the foundation of learning. This is precisely what universities were founded to be in the Middle Ages and what they were until relatively recently in history. Today the university is an amalgam of different things: a vocational training environment, a technical school, an employment agency, a home for research and writing in every conceivable field, a place for extending youth as long as possible, a place for parties and antics, and much more. There are many wonderful exceptions to the rule, but the rule still prevails: the archetype of the university has been transformed.

Rather than merely complain about this, the Acton Institute set out to fill a need. It teaches the theory and practice of a free and virtuous society to people with a special interest in religion. This has done more than merely provide training. It has given rise to the creation of a new cultural environment for learning itself, one that revives the older idea. I believe that this is what accounts for the happiness of everyone involved, the sense of joy one finds at the event and the overwhelming opinion that Acton offers something new and different.

This year, I spoke at length of the formation of my own ideas of freedom and my journey in the faith. There was a time when these ideas were not known to me. Discovering the political theory of freedom and then the veracity of faith were the two great events of my life.

I'm deeply grateful to everyone who makes this event possible. Even in the midst of so much despair in this country and abroad, there are bright lights on the horizon. One of them is the Acton University. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for making it possible.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Robert A. Sirico".

Rev. Robert A. Sirico, President

The mission of the Acton Institute is to promote a free and virtuous society characterized by individual liberty and sustained by religious principles.

ACTONINSTITUTE

161 Ottawa Avenue NW, Suite 301 • Grand Rapids, MI 49503 • USA • www.acton.org

Acton University Continues Expansion

Acton University in Grand Rapids, Michigan continues to expand its reach. This year, the Acton Institute received over 800 applications and welcomed over 400 participants, representing 55 countries, who attended courses from June 15 - 18.

Acton University is authentically ecumenical, as faculty and students represent many faith traditions. Many participants are seminary students. Others are entrepreneurs, college faculty and administrators, missionaries, physicians, and retirees. They are leaders in their schools, churches, and communities.

This year at Acton University, there were 70 courses taught by 32 faculty members. Among some of the lectures this year was "The Federalist Debate: Balancing Liberty and Order" by Dr. John Pinheiro. Dr. Pinheiro is a history professor at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids. Dr. Daniel Mahoney taught a course titled "Centralization and Civil Society." Dr. Mahoney is a professor of political science at Assumption College in Worcester, Massachusetts. Mr. Brett Elder,

who is the founder and Executive Director of the Stewardship Council, taught "Stewardship, Generosity, and Charitable Giving."

Mr. Jim Healy, a retired businessman, Acton supporter, and volunteer at Acton University, commented on the courses this year: "The enthusiasm both by the presenter and the participants this year was unbelievable. It really reinforces the validity of Acton University." The evenings featured special lectures as conference attendees continued learning about a free and virtuous society.

You can purchase audio of many of the lectures this year at <http://sites.fastspring.com/acton/product/actonuniversity>. Each lecture is only \$1.99.

Acton University is a unique, four-day exploration of the intellectual foundations of a free society. Guided by a distinguished, international faculty, Acton University is an opportunity to deepen your knowledge and integrate rigorous philosophy, Christian theology and sound economics.

"The enthusiasm both by the presenter and the participants this year was unbelievable."



Acton University had over 800 applications this year

From Our Conference Participants

Thank you very much for your exceptional work in the organization of Acton University. I have enjoyed it very much. It has been a great intellectual and spiritual experience.

—Prof. Rafael García Pérez
Pamplona, Spain

It was my first time at Acton University and I wish very much to repeat the experience. I have learned a lot and the participants have been fantastic. I very much admire the work Acton is doing.

—Dr. Cheikh Mbacke Gueye
Bendern, Liechtenstein

Acton Engages WCRC Conference

Focusing on a strategic opportunity to influence the course of a newly formed ecumenical body, the Acton Institute garnered exhibition space at the Uniting General Council of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) this June. The WCRC is the result of a merger between two smaller Reformed ecumenical bodies, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) and Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC). The Uniting General Council of the WCRC was held in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on the campus of Calvin College. At the top of the council's agenda was discussion focusing on the Accra Confession, a document coming out of the last general meeting of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in Accra, Ghana in 2004. The Accra Confession decries globalization and a neoliberal "empire" led by the United States. In opposition to this unbalanced perspective, the Acton Institute distributed hundreds of Accra Confession study kits, which included relevant academic papers and copies of the latest Christian's Library Press book, "Ecumenical Babel: Confusing Economic Ideology

that American Exceptionalism is dead and that it is a cause for celebration. The president himself said "I believe in American Exceptionalism, just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British Exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek Exceptionalism." But what is American Exceptionalism, and when and where did these ideas of America's greatness take root? Are they good for America? When and how has American Exceptionalism been abused? What are the spiritual connections? Is America's greatness slipping away? Associate Editor Ray Nothstine answers all these questions and more at the next Acton on Tap.

If you are in the Grand Rapids area August 12 please join us at Derby Station for this event.

On June 12, Dr. Jonathan Witt, writer and Research Fellow at the Acton Institute led a discussion about J.R.R. Tolkien's views on freedom, capitalism, socialism, and distributism, and he looked at some of the ways those views have been misrepresented.

Acton on Tap features a speaker who briefly introduces a theme and leads group discussion throughout the evening.

ACTON News



Acton engages new Reformed ecumenical group



and the Church's Social Witness" by Jordan J. Ballor. The kits were well-received by the delegates, and when the new WCRC president Rev. Dr. Jerry Pillay of South Africa held his first press conference, he was asked about the book. Pillay said he "had not yet read" Ecumenical Babel.

Is American Exceptionalism Dead?

In The Washington Times, Monica Crowley, with tongue firmly planted in cheek, stated American Exceptionalism is "So Last Century." Many scholars, pundits, and even politicians have declared

The Birth of Freedom

The Acton Documentary "The Birth of Freedom" received renewed attention over Independence Day weekend. Six local PBS stations in Tampa Bay, San Diego, Baton Rouge, Syracuse, Grand Rapids, Michigan and Carbondale, Illinois aired the documentary. "The Birth of Freedom" tells the story of how modern understandings of individual liberty were developed and addresses the questions, "Why would anyone believe that all men are created equal? That all should be free?"

Arthur Brooks on America's Future

Dr. Arthur C. Brooks, president of the American Enterprise Institute, lectured at an Acton event and signed copies of his latest book "The Battle: How the Fight Between Free Enterprise and Big Government Will Shape America's Future." The breakfast event took place at the University Club in downtown Grand Rapids and was attended by over 150 friends and supporters of the Acton Institute.

Dr. Brooks says, "America is a 70 – 30 percent nation in favor of free enterprise," but the forces of statism have capitalized on the financial crisis and have an entire arsenal of federal power at their disposal to advance their agenda. He also discussed the importance of earned success and how it relates to happiness and human flourishing. Earned success is the ability to create value honestly and it taps into the entrepreneurial spirit.

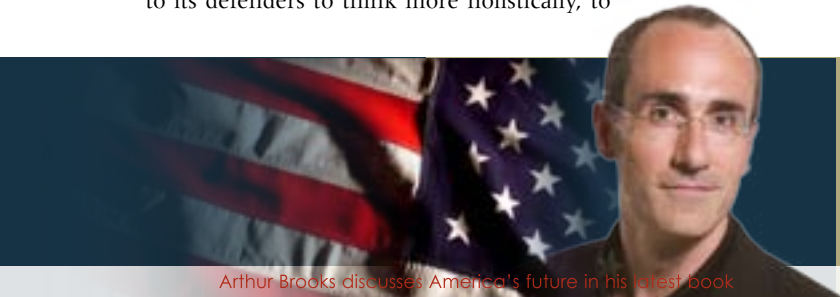
In his review of Dr. Brooks's book, Acton Associate Editor Ray Nothstine noted:

What Brooks has crafted is a spirited defense of the free market economy and a challenge to its defenders to think more holistically, to

be aware of spiritual value in a free economy. To fail to do so would only sustain the well-worn narrative of defenders of markets as greedy misers and swindlers.

During his lecture, he also praised tea party groups for raising moral concerns about the unsustainability and irresponsibility of federal spending in Washington. He referred to the defense of the free market system as a cultural battle. He blamed both political parties for the fiscal crisis in Washington and called for leaders of principle. "America needs leaders committed to expanding liberty, increasing individual opportunity, and defending free enterprise," he said. You can purchase copies of "The Battle" through the Acton Bookshoppe.

Dr. Arthur C. Brooks was also the speaker at last year's Acton annual dinner. Until January 1, 2009, he was the Louis A. Bantle Professor of Business and Government Policy at Syracuse University. He is the author of eight books and many articles on topics ranging from the economics of the arts to applied mathematics.



Arthur Brooks discusses America's future in his latest book



ACTON in the News

"True social change comes not from laws or politics, but from renewal of our personal, familial, and ecclesiastical commitments."

—Excerpted from Jordan Ballor's article in *The Macomb Daily*.

Dr. Samuel Gregg

Title: Social Justice and Subsidiarity
Program: *Al Kresta Radio Show*
Air Date: 6.28.10

Jordan Ballor

Title: Church activists shouldn't adopt separation as doctrine
Publisher: *The Detroit News*
Date: 6.17.10

Jordan Ballor

Title: Missing the Boat on the Tea Party Movement
Publisher: *The Macomb Daily*
Date: 5.29.10

Reminder

Help Acton Promote Freedom and Virtue!

The Acton Institute depends on the generosity of supporters like you. If you have not donated to Acton, but enjoy *Acton Notes*, please consider helping us meet our goals! Your help makes possible our mission to promote a free and virtuous society. You may choose to donate using the envelope provided, or you may visit the Acton website to make a secure donation online. We send our heartfelt thanks to those who have been so generous in the past with your strategic support as well as your prayers. You have a broad vision and a generous heart.



SAVE THE DATE

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF PROMOTING FAITH AND FREEDOM

ACTON INSTITUTE ANNUAL DINNER

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2010

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

MR. RICHARD M. DEVOS TO RECEIVE THE FAITH & FREEDOM AWARD

ACTON Book Shoppe



Ecumenical Babel: Confusing Economic Ideology and the Church's Social Witness

by Jordan Ballor

A critical engagement of the ecumenical movement's approach to ethical and economic issues, *Ecumenical Babel* updates a line of criticism articulated by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Paul Ramsey, and Ernest W. Lefever.

Paperback 167 pages Original Price \$7.00 Sale \$5.00



The Battle: How the Fight between Free Enterprise and Big Government Will Shape America's Future

by Arthur C. Brooks

America faces a new culture war. It is not a war about guns, abortions, or gays—rather it is a war against the creeping changes to our entrepreneurial culture, the true bedrock of who we are as a people. The new culture war is a battle between free enterprise and social democracy.

Hardcover 192 pages Original Price \$16.00 Sale \$14.95



Birth of Freedom DVD and study guide

produced by Acton Media

Humans are separated by enormous differences in talent and circumstance. Why would anyone believe that all men are created equal? That all should be free? That all deserve a voice in choosing their leaders? Why would any nation consider this a self-evident truth? How is freedom born?

DVD 60 mins Original Price \$25.00 Sale \$20.00

**For our fastest service and a complete list of titles,
visit www.acton.org/bookshoppe.**

	PRICE	QUANTITY	TOTAL
Ecumenical Babel	\$5.00		
The Battle	\$14.95		
Birth of Freedom DVD and study guide	\$20.00		

Make checks payable to "Acton Institute." For orders in the United States, Canada, and Mexico: for the first item, add US \$6.75 for shipping; plus US \$1.00 for each additional item. Overseas orders: US \$8.75 for the first item, plus US \$1.75 for each additional item.

Michigan residents add 6% sales tax _____

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Calendar of Events

ACTON INSTITUTE EVENTS

Date	Event	Location
Aug 12	Acton on Tap “Is American Exceptionalism Dead?” Ray Nothstine to speak	Grand Rapids, MI
Aug 18	Does Social Justice Require Socialism? Rev. Robert Sirico to speak	Colorado Springs, CO
Sep 2	Acton Lecture Series Dr. Samuel Gregg to speak	Grand Rapids, MI
Sep 15	Pittsburgh Luncheon Rev. Robert Sirico to speak	Pittsburgh, PA
Sep 16-19	Towards a Free and Virtuous Society Conference	Sonntagberg, Austria

STAFF ACTIVITIES/DEADLINES

Date	Event	Location
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